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Jerry C. Beasley

## Tobias Smollett: The Scot in England

In volume two of *The Present State of All Nations* (1768-69), Tobias Smollett wrote that "Glasgow is the most beautiful town of Great Britain, adorned with a great number of public edifices, such as the cathedral and five or six other elegant churches, the tolbooth, town hall, and several hospitals, whose lofty turrets and spires yield a magnificent prospect at a distance" (p. 104). What we hear in these words is the late-life nostalgia of a Scottish writer who had in his youth removed himself to England, felt the dislocation caused by a collision of cultures, and kept alive a vision of his homeland as a kind of locus for all that was good, beautiful, and safe. *The Present State*, published only a few years before Smollett died, contains other tributes to Scotland—to its people, its landscape, its rich cultural heritage; his last novel, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771), echoes many of these tributes, personalizing them in the voice of the autobiographical Matthew Bramble and thus giving them a kind of power and poignancy that reveals (in a way that the more detached *Present State* does not) the depth of Smollett's feeling about the land he had left behind at the age of eighteen, when he went down to London full of hope and ambition, his pocket stuffed with a tragedy called *The Regicide*, with which he expected to make his reputation as a writer in the world of English letters.

It was from the city of Glasgow that Smollett departed for London in 1739. He had spent three years there as apprentice to the eminent surgeons William Stirling and John Gordon, and he had also attended lectures at the university—"the most flourishing" in all of Scotland, as he described it in *The Pre-*

*sent State* (II, 104).<sup>1</sup> We know too little of Smollett's time in Glasgow to say with any certainty what his attitudes toward the place were. What we do know, however, is that Glasgow furnished Smollett with his very earliest impressions of urban life, and his observation in *The Present State*, where he remembers the "magnificent prospect" of the city from "a distance," strongly suggests what those impressions were. As a novelist Smollett was obsessively, though by no means exclusively, preoccupied with the city as an environment in which were concentrated all the most important conditions of modern life—the alienation of the individual amidst the bustle of commerce, the ugliness of urban sprawl, the chaotic racket of the streets, the corruptions of politics, the horrid realities of poverty and crime, the violent confusion of class identities created by accelerating social change. One could get lost in a city, be hurt by its unexpected cruelties, as the young Roderick Random is upon his arrival in London; one could be overwhelmed by the crowding, the filth, the noise, the frenzy, the perceived hostility of a city, as Matt Bramble is in Bath and then, more painfully, in London. Seen in the light of Smollett's harsh treatments of the city in his novels, and keeping in mind his nostalgic observation in *The Present State*, the beautiful image of Glasgow seems always to have loomed large in his imagination, projecting for him an ideal standard against which to measure the meaning of life in the other cities he knew, where the people of his fiction encountered some of their hardest and most vexing experience.

What I have just written is, I must admit, no more than speculation grounded in a strong hunch; Smollett is tantalizingly vague on the subject of Glasgow's personal importance to him, even in *Humphry Clinker*. There can be no question, however, that Scotland as he remembered and imagined it provided him with standards of judgment, while it also enforced on him a troublingly fragmented sense of personal identity: Was he a Scot or an Englishman? The tension embedded in that question is often reflected in Smollett's work; it is, I believe, a source of the power with which he was able to represent the dislocations of modern life in his novels, and a major reason why he struggled so hard in much of his non-fiction, especially the historical writings, to strike a balance between praise and criticism of both his native and his adopted lands.

To put this point more succinctly: Smollett, like many other Scotsmen of his day who sought recognition in English public life (physicians, politicians, and such writers as James Thomson, Allan Ramsay, James Macpherson, David Hume, John Home, James Boswell, and Henry Mackenzie), was deeply ambivalent about national *and* personal identity. The Union of 1707 was a powerful

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<sup>1</sup>Smollett actually left Glasgow with mixed ambitions. He wanted to practice as a surgeon, but he wanted even more to achieve success as a writer. He did establish himself as a medical man, thus putting to use his early training with Stirling and Gordon; but he struggled in this career, which he all but abandoned after about 1750, the year when he purchased a medical degree from Aberdeen University for £28 Scots. Thereafter he focused almost exclusively on his writing.

political fact that greatly intensified such ambivalence; traditional English hostility toward the Scots was exacerbated by the Jacobite rebellions of 1715 and 1745, and it combined with an abysmal lack of information about Scottish culture, even its geography, to promote a dislocating divisiveness. Smollett felt this divisiveness keenly, and at a personal level. The English, he wrote to his friend John Moore in a letter of 2 January 1758, will gladly countenance any author who "attacks our Nation in any shape. You cannot conceive the Jealousy that prevails against us."<sup>2</sup> In *Humphry Clinker*, he made Jerry Melford say that "South Britons" are in general as "woefully ignorant" about Scotland as his aunt Tabitha, who believes that one can get there only by sea. Between "want of curiosity," Jerry laments, "and traditional sarcasms, the effect of ancient animosity, the people at the other end of the island know as little of Scotland as of Japan."<sup>3</sup>

The problem of cultural identity was perhaps especially acute for Scottish writers trying to achieve commercial success with the English reading public and critical success among those who counted in the English world of letters. The issues faced by these writers were hard ones: how to write convincingly in polite English, thus dislocating from that dimension of personal definition that is determined by one's native linguistic heritage; how far to go—through choice of subject matter, adaptation of sensibilities, abandonment of native traditions—toward assimilation by the adopted culture. Smollett was less comfortable, it seems, than other writers—Thomson, Mackenzie, and Boswell in particular—with the project of finding a balance between the strong urges generated by his two identities as Scottish man and English writer. He assimilated, though only so far. He remained always a Scot. But still he is, in the phrase of the Scottish-American A. D. McKillop, one of the "early masters" of *English* fiction.<sup>4</sup> And scholars can be specialists in Smollett while by no means claiming expertise in Scottish literature or culture.

Kenneth Simpson, in his excellent book *The Protean Scot*,<sup>5</sup> has written convincingly and at length about the crisis of Scottish national identity catalyzed by the social and cultural effects of the Union, and about the resulting "cultural dissociation" (p. 10) felt by Scottish writers, including Smollett. Simpson has made it unnecessary for me to linger further over such matters, even if I were

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<sup>2</sup>*The Letters of Tobias Smollett*, ed. Lewis M. Knapp (Oxford, 1970), p. 65.

<sup>3</sup>*The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*, ed. Thomas R. Preston (Athens, GA, 1990), pp. 206-7.

<sup>4</sup>See the chapter entitled "Tobias Smollett" in McKillop's *Early Masters of English Fiction* (Lawrence, KS, 1956), pp. 147-87.

<sup>5</sup>The full title of this work is *The Protean Scot: The Crisis of Identity in Eighteenth-Century Scottish Literature* (Aberdeen, 1988).



capable of treating them with anything like his authority. So I should like to turn now and look directly at Smollett's own writing.

Beginning with "The Tears of Scotland" (1746), his first important published work, Smollett made it clear that the issue of his homeland would be a crucial one to him as a writer. The poem is a moving reaction to "Butcher" Cumberland's harsh punishments against the Scots in the aftermath of the rebellion of 1745. Somewhat surprisingly perhaps, for a man so passionate about his origins and their personal and moral significance to him, Smollett made Scotland explicitly his subject matter only rarely—or, I should say, his explicitness seems rare given the accumulated great bulk of all his work. This was surely in part the result of a common human phenomenon—the attempt, never fully successful, to escape the power of one's past when entering new arenas of experience, whether that past is remembered as good, painful, or indifferent. In Smollett's case, the earliest memories of life were a mixture of pleasure and pain, as he reveals in the semi-autobiographical opening chapters of *The Adventures of Roderick Random* (1748). The sweetly nostalgic reflections upon Scotland in *Humphry Clinker* came late in his career, when he brought recollection to bear on a personal history of frenetic labor, frequent conflict and hardship, and, finally, illness. Except in these two novels (interestingly, they are his first and last), Scotland hardly ever figures directly in Smollett's fiction as setting or subject. As I shall try to show presently, however, the *idea* of Scotland, and of his own Scottishness, was always centrally important to him as a novelist who was also a fierce satirist of contemporary English and European public life, characters, and manners.

For the moment I want to focus on the other work, which shows us Smollett the professional writer trying to balance fairly and honestly his two identities as Scot and Englishman; or, more accurately, trying to *be* an English writer without ceasing to be a Scot. The overall range of his work is cosmopolitan, not provincial; as historian, journalist, and translator (of Le Sage, Cervantes, and Voltaire, among others), as travel writer, even as novelist, he has much more to say about England and Europe than about Scotland. In these proportions he reflects the reality faced by Scots in his time. By the parliamentary acts of Union, as Simpson has so emphatically reminded us, Scotland entered into a new phase of relations with the British and European political communities—not altogether happily or gracefully, and at great risk to its traditional provincial ways. In the mid-eighteenth century, the period of Smollett's career, Scotland was (so to speak) still "old"; England and Europe were "new." Progressive changes in politics (with the expanded possibilities of corruption they brought), in literary culture, in relations among classes, in mobility and communication, and, increasingly, in work and the means of production, made the modern world seem at once exciting and dangerous—disorderly, chaotic, uncertain.

Many struggled to meet the challenge of reconciling old and new (think of Swift, Pope, Fielding, Johnson, Hume, Voltaire, Rousseau); the struggle was

especially difficult for Scots, and for Smollett it was intensified by a sensibility naturally raw and nervous. But he tried; and, though he never fully accepted the new, he certainly did recognize the need for its reconciliation with the old. Growing middle- and upper-class obsession with material luxury continually troubled him, as John Sekora has shown;<sup>6</sup> the widespread abuses of power associated with rising democratic politics always outraged him; the mixing of classes dislocated him. Yet in *Humphry Clinker*, after a lifetime of agitation and sometime fragmentation of response to these vexing matters, he allowed his imagination to move from severe censure of the English and ecstatic praise of the Scots toward a vision of reconciliation that validates the Union, thus promoting a new order grounded in the notion of one Britain; that renews the familiar idealism of the rural estate as the locus of tranquillity and harmony, an idealism common to both the Scottish and the English literary traditions; and that, through its several marriages at the end, not only unites nations but also brings classes closer together.

Following "The Tears of Scotland" and *Roderick Random*, Smollett wrote comparatively little about his homeland until undertaking his four-volume *Complete History of England*, published in 1757-8. His youthful tragedy *The Regicide*, never produced but published privately by Smollett in 1749, ought to be mentioned here in passing. Its subject is Scottish; the play is based on the historical episode of the assassination of James I in 1437. That Smollett should have taken up such a subject for a work written when he was very young, and before he left home, is not surprising. His having done so tells us little about his later views toward Scotland, even less about his troubled sense of himself as a Scottish writer in England—except that the preface he published with his play is an angry account of the disappointment of all his hopes for its success. Smollett the alien surfaces in this preface.

But not in the *Complete History*. Reviews of this work sometimes criticized it for a Scottish and Tory bias, but it is on the whole a reliable chronicle that simply incorporates Scottish history into the large breadth of its coverage, which begins with the arrival of Julius Caesar in Britain and concludes with the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748. The same may be said generally of the *Continuation* (five volumes, 1760-5), which carries the history forward to the mid-1760s. There are some moments of severity against the English: the account of the reign of William and Mary, for example, and specifically of William's abuses (as Smollett saw them) both of the principles of the Revolution Settlement of 1688 and of Scottish national interests during the years preceding the Union; the description of the 'Forty-Five and its aftermath; and, in the *Continuation*, the hostile record of the treaty arrangements by which William Pitt, at first so admired by Smollett, increasingly perplexed the conduct of the Seven Years'

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<sup>6</sup>*Luxury: The Concept in Western Thought, Eden to Smollett* (Baltimore, 1977); see esp. Chaps. 4-9.

War during his terms as prime minister. But in these historical works Smollett was clearly writing as an Englishman, one whose naturally alien status as a Scot perhaps colored his view of things somewhat, but did not entirely prevent his detachment or undermine his authority. In this he was very like his celebrated countryman David Hume, whose popular *History of England* began to appear in 1754 and actually prompted Smollett's rival work.

In *The Present State*, the major historical project of his later career, Smollett took equal—if not greater—pains to provide a reasoned view of Scotland and England as lands separated by ancient national traditions but joined by modern political arrangements and progressively integrative cultural relations. In this connection it is symbolic that he placed his accounts of the two countries one after the other in successive volumes of the work (the last 100 or so pages of volume one through the first 349 pages of volume three), that he began with Scotland and turned then to England, and that he gave the latter proportionately lengthier treatment while still devoting more than 250 pages to the former. Louis L. Martz has suggested, rightly in my judgment, that Smollett was in part addressing the very English problem of deplorable ignorance about Scotland—the same ignorance lamented later in *Humphry Clinker*. By Martz's count, before the publication of *The Present State* the eighteenth century had already produced almost two dozen multi-volume, comprehensive accounts of England (not including travel books, county histories, and specialized works), but only five extensive descriptions of Scotland—the latter all buried in more general treatments of Great Britain, such as the revised versions of Defoe's *Tour*.<sup>7</sup> Smollett's care, and his method of combining personal knowledge with consultation of several of the five major accounts preceding his own, made for the most thorough and authoritative description of Scotland ever written.

*The Present State* does include the occasional jarring expression of national prejudice. Early in the geographical description of Scotland proper with which volume two begins (the last pages of volume one are devoted to the islands), Smollett bristles and recites the old English proverb: "In every corner of the earth, one may find a Scot, a rat, and a Newcastle grindstone." To the offensive chauvinism of this proverb he replies in kind, but more subtly. The Scots are, he says, "for the most part, sober, industrious, circumspect, shrewd, and insinuating, well aware of their interest, which in foreign countries they prosecute with perseverance and success, even among people by whom they are envied and discountenanced" (II, 10).

Such moments as this are relatively rare. Throughout his accounts of both nations, Smollett distributes praise about equally with candid reservations and criticism. Of England he says, for example, that its constitution is possibly "the best that ever was reduced to practice in any part of the world," though it

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<sup>7</sup>*The Later Career of Tobias Smollett* (1942; rpt. Hamden, CT, 1967), pp. 109-12.

"contains in itself the seeds of its own dissolution. While individuals are corruptible, and the means of corruption so copiously abound, it will always be in the power of an artful and ambitious prince to sap the foundations of liberty" (II, 161, 165). The Scots, as "soldiers, seamen, traders, and tradesmen," match the world's best, while modern Scottish culture is distinguished for "learning and genius" (II, 11); the men of England "are the most comely, and the women the most beautiful, that any kingdom of Europe can produce," and, "in point of cleanliness, the English excel all the nations in Europe" (II, 212, 213)—the latter a virtue sorely lacking among the generality of Scots. And so on.

Martz argues convincingly for dating the composition of the Scottish section of *The Present State*, and probably the English section as well, in the early 1760s (*Later Career*, pp. 106-8). But he errs, I think, in assuming that Smollett could not have written the English section at a later date, since its fairmindedness would have been impossible to the disillusioned and rancorous man who almost simultaneously, in 1769, published *The History and Adventures of an Atom* (p. 130). By the middle and later years of the decade, Smollett was indeed disillusioned with England and its party politics—of this more presently; but he was not prevented from writing *Humphry Clinker*. More to the point, the poise displayed in *The Present State* is, as I have already suggested, consistent with Smollett's usual determined attitude and practice in his most public role as historian.

Even in his *Travels through France and Italy* (1766), an imaginative work of frequent cantankerousness, based on personal experience (Smollett had taken pretty much the same trip he recorded) but nonetheless partaking significantly of the historical, Smollett reached for equilibrium and balance. The *Travels* appeared only two years before *The Present State* and some three years after the events that so entangled Smollett in party politics and left him embittered. The point is that Smollett was able, when he chose to do it, to suppress or at least control private feeling and personal judgment in the interest of public purpose. This, I think, is what Martz fails to understand. Besides, rancor was a fact of Smollett's life long before the composition of any of the later works, including *The Present State*. The letter to John Moore already quoted was written in 1758; four years earlier, in March 1754, he had written bitterly from Chelsea to his friend Alexander Carlyle, longing for Scotland and almost despairing of England; perhaps he was responding to the poor reception given his second and third novels, *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* (1751) and *The Adventures of Ferdinand Count Fathom* (1753). "I am heartily tired of this Land of Indifference and Phlegm," he complained, "where the finer Sensations of the Soul are not felt, and Felicity is held to consist in stupifying Port and overgrown Buttocks of Beef, where Genius is lost, Learning undervalued, and Taste altogether extinguished, and Ignorance prevails" (*Letters*, p. 33).

The more public Smollett of the *Travels* made his persona actually leave England instead of merely dreaming about doing so, firing off (in his first letter) violent shots at its scenes of "malice," "faction," "illiberal dispute, and incredi-



ble infatuation, where a few worthless incendiaries had, by dint of perfidious calumnies and atrocious abuse, kindled up a flame which threatened all the horrors of civil dissension."<sup>8</sup> Significantly, in his very last letter (the forty-first), the same persona expresses delight over the prospect of his imminent return home from France:

I am at last in a situation to indulge my view with a sight of Britain, after an absence of two years; and indeed you cannot imagine what pleasure I feel while I survey the white cliffs of Dover, at this distance. . . . I am attached to my country, because it is the land of liberty, cleanliness, and convenience: but I love it still more tenderly, as the scene of all my interesting connexions; as the habitation of my friends, for whose conversation, correspondence, and esteem, I wish alone to live. (p. 341)

The disillusionment alluded to in the first letter of the *Travels*, and on which Martz rests his argument for the early composition of the English portion of *The Present State*, arose from Smollett's involvement in the affairs of the Bute ministry, which was continually beset by violent controversy and alarming public unrest. Lord Bute, a Scot and a Tory, became prime minister in May 1762. He had anticipated the need for a new periodical in behalf of his policies, and he asked his countryman Smollett, at the time writing and publishing his *Continuation of the Complete History*, to take up the editorship. Smollett agreed, and *The Briton*, a weekly, began publication before the end of the month in which Bute assumed power. The blatantly partisan purpose of this enterprise led Smollett inevitably into passionate rhetorical defenses not only of Bute's policies, but of his Scottishness. *The Briton* was ineffectual; Bute ignored it, and Smollett grew bitter. He was in any case unhappy in the midst of the partisan fray, which became especially vicious after John Wilkes and Charles Churchill joined it with their fiercely anti-ministry *North Briton* just about a month after the first number of Smollett's magazine appeared. And he was not comfortable with the kind of shrillness required of antagonists in the pitched political battle carried on by the periodical press. He gave up *The Briton* in February 1763, not three-quarters of a year after beginning it.

Smollett was certainly capable of acidity and rhetorical violence; we know this from his letters, from several of his pamphlets, from his *Travels*, and of course from his prose fiction, including the *Atom*. But these were all expressions from his most private self, or from an unleashed imagination. The more public role he adopted in his other journalism, for the *Critical Review* and the *British Magazine*, and in his historical writings, required him to take a position that distanced him from faction, from the conflict of ideological warfare, and from the divisiveness inherent in his own double identity as Scot and as Eng-

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<sup>8</sup>*Travels through France and Italy*, ed. Frank Felsentein (Oxford, 1979), p. 2.

lishman. Occasionally the distance was little more than an illusion; Smollett accurately assessed his aim and his achievement when, in January 1758, he wrote to John Moore, protesting that in the *Complete History* he had, "before God" and as far as he was able, "adhered to Truth without espousing any faction," though he admitted to writing "with a warm side to those principles" in which he was educated (*Letters*, p. 65). His work for *The Briton* gave him no choice but to espouse faction, which he hated, and he could not do it for very long. In any event, his experience as a political journalist soured him forever on party politics, on national as well as ideological factions, and on politicians, including Bute, with whom he became almost as disillusioned as with Pitt. The direct result of this experience was the *Atom*, which takes no prisoners, Scottish or English, Tory or Whig.

Smollett's hatred of faction and its divisiveness manifests his awareness of a deep and complex division within himself—a division between irascibility and sweetness, between his two national identities as Scotsman and Englishman, between the private self who wrote irritated letters and satiric fictions and the more public self who mediated, using historical writing (quite apart from its practical, money-making value to him) in part as an exercise of restraint to gain equilibrium. The best and clearest evidence of Smollett's alert understanding of the division within him is to be found in the mock-dedication to *Ferdinand Count Fathom*, where he addresses himself (as Doctor \*\*\*\*\*), deploring his pride, obstinacy, jealousy, and intemperance, while owning and celebrating his integrity, sanguinity of disposition, and general worthiness of friendship and esteem. The sense of personal alienation is unmistakable. In this same dedication, however, Smollett goes on to acknowledge his alien status as an author writing to an antagonistic world: "We live in a censorious age," he says, and "an author cannot take too much precaution to anticipate the prejudice, misapprehension and temerity of malice, ignorance and presumption."<sup>9</sup>

Smollett's expression of anxiety over his position as outsider in the world of letters externalizes the internal fragmentation he appears to have felt; in the configuration he creates, he is by implication all goodness, decency, and wisdom, whereas the world is all meanness, hostility, and stupidity. The anxiety itself may well have arisen in large measure from self-consciousness of his identity as a displaced Scot. If in his historical work he strove for a discipline that allowed him to play the role of detached public servant and citizen, in his imaginative writing he relaxed the discipline, still yearning for and striving toward balance but giving full expression to a private sense of the self as alien. This is true throughout all the novels; it is true of the persona in the *Travels*; and it is in a peculiar way also true of that odd little being the atom as it recites its most curious adventures in a most bizarre world—though without ever arriving at any resolution in order or equilibrium, for the narrative simply stops with

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<sup>9</sup>*The Adventures of Ferdinand Count Fathom*, ed. Jerry C. Beasley (Athens, GA, 1988), p. 4.

references to Bute's fall from power in 1763 and his departure for self-exile in France some years later, in the midst of the Wilkes riots of 1768. These works, *because* they were products of the imagination and thus not limited by the rules and the discipline of historical writing, gave Smollett release into the full and creative display of the internal *and* external conflict that beset him nearly all his life and that, perhaps paradoxically, he most nearly resolved (as I have already noted) in his last work of fiction, *Humphry Clinker*.

I want to turn directly to the novels now, lingering only very briefly over *Peregrine Pickle*, *Ferdinand Count Fathom*, and *The Adventures of Sir Launcelot Greaves* (1760-61), which give little attention to Scotland, though they do pursue the theme of alienation which is always Smollett's great subject. In these three works, published during the decade 1751-61, Smollett most emphatically preoccupied himself with the experience of the Englishman. In *Peregrine Pickle* and *Ferdinand Count Fathom*, as he was later to do in the *Travels*, he extended his narrative scope to the larger European community, thus simultaneously broadening the range of his definition of the alienated modern individual. The protagonist of each novel is most definitely an outsider. Perry is a wayward adventurer, Fathom a criminal, Greaves a latter-day Quixote who sets about doing good in a world that clearly does not want him in its midst. Perry, like Roderick Random before him, is torn between native decency (sometimes, it seems, seriously in remission) and his violent, frequently uncontrollable urges to scourge the fools and knaves—they are legion—he encounters in his path-way, whether in the English or French countryside, in London, or in Paris. Fathom, whose characterization is a thoughtful study of the criminal mind and life, is almost literally a man without a country; he is born in a wagon as it maneuvers across the border between Holland and Flanders. In the major cities of Europe he practices his art of confidence man, is duped as often as he dupes, and then travels to England—his legal homeland, because his mother was an English citizen, and a place he regards as a "land of promise, flowing with milk and honey, and abounding with subjects on which he knew his talents would be properly exercised" (p. 77). He is wrong; or rather, the land is abundant all right, but in the end it gets the better of him. At the novel's conclusion he receives his comeuppance and, like Perry, is brought into submission to the prevailing moral order—an order imagined by the author and not broadly manifest in the world as Fathom knows it, in England or elsewhere.

Greaves simply persists, moving past scenes of perfidy and through encounters with the inmates of an insane asylum and a prison, until finally he triumphs. He is a representation of goodness who transforms not the world, but individual characters affected by the power of his example. The often noticed connections of *Peregrine Pickle* and *Ferdinand Count Fathom* with the picaresque as narrative of the roguish outsider are telling, as is the connection between Greaves as naive reformer and the Quixote as madman. All three novels are episodic, as indeed *Roderick Random* and *Humphry Clinker* are, and their structure signifies something important about the plight of the solitary individ-

ual, caught in the violent uncertainties of the modern world.<sup>10</sup> "I am old enough," Smollett wrote to David Garrick (in April 1761) not long after the final serial installment of *Sir Launcelot Greaves* had appeared in the *British Magazine*, "to have seen and observed that we are all playthings of fortune, and that it depends upon something as insignificant and precarious as the tossing up of a halfpenny whether a man rises to affluence and honours, or continues to his dying day struggling with the difficulties and disgraces of life" (*Letters*, p. 98).

This is all commonplace stuff. I have rehearsed it only because I believe Smollett the Scot, a lifelong outsider in his adopted England, identified very closely with the alien characters he created, and that in fact he created them out of his own sense of alienation. Furthermore, it seems clear that both Perry and Fathom, and Roderick Random as well, are expressions of that darker self portrayed in the mock-dedication to *Ferdinand Count Fathom*, the self alienated internally and externally by the loneliness of cultural dislocation and by the exercise of a raw sensibility aggravated into indignation, even meanness, as it responds to a world that proves especially sordid, erratic, and unsafe to anyone departing from its generally depraved norms. That world must be punished, and vigorously. Greaves figures forth the other side of the same self-portrait, the side that is sweet, generous, full of integrity and good purpose, worthy of esteem. But he, too, is an alien in a hostile world—a moral stranger, really; and, like Roderick, Perry, and Fathom, he represents only a fragment of the total self from which his author created him.

The angry Scot who felt that he could never gain full and unqualified acceptance in England—as a writer and as a man—surfaced in the deviant, sometimes ferocious conduct of Roderick, Perry, and Fathom; the self-righteous Scot who associated goodness with the best old traditions of his own country, and danger, even wickedness, with the progressive ways of the English, received loving expression in the character of Greaves. In all four novels there is final resolution in the establishment of order and harmony; the resolution always works, for it proceeds from the satiric strategy of retreat from the world—or, in the case of Fathom, total reformation and banishment.<sup>11</sup> But retreat is repudiation; it cannot signify reconciliation and the integration of culture and self, and it does not parallel the kind of balance Smollett sought in his historical writing.

That would come in *Humphry Clinker*. A comparative glance or two at the earlier *Roderick Random* may help to underscore the degree to which, very near the end of his life, Smollett, did in fact finally manage to articulate a vision

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<sup>10</sup>On the importance of episodic structure as representational and metaphoric strategy in early novels, including Smollett's, see Jerry C. Beasley, "Life's Episodes: Story and Its Form in the Eighteenth Century," in *The Idea of the Novel in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Robert W. Uphaus (East Lansing, MI, 1988), pp. 21-45.

<sup>11</sup>Many readers have found these endings forced. I do not agree, especially in the case of *Roderick Random*; see Jerry C. Beasley, *Novels of the 1740s* (Athens, GA, 1982), pp. 113-25.

of reconciliation—reconciliation of cultures and of the divisions in an imagined self. Still a young man when he wrote *Roderick Random*, and still smarting at the rough treatment *The Regicide* had received from theatrical managers, Smollett made his hero's Scottishness a central fact of his experience and a source of his suffering in the England to which, like his author, he had traveled to make his fortune. Roderick had suffered in Scotland too, at the hands of family members, a schoolmaster, an apothecary for whom he worked, and others. Smollett did not represent his homeland as perfect. But Roderick, a fellow of "modest merit" (as he is described in the preface), is literally brutalized upon his arrival in London. First he is mocked for his speech; then he is viciously teased by a tavern wag who tells him that his red hair (the mark of a Scot) makes him resemble a fox whose "tail was not yet cut."<sup>12</sup> He is bedaubed with mud by a coachman, and he is humiliated (by a Scottish pedagogue!) for his awkward country dress and—again—his "carroty locks." "No christian will admit such a figure into his hawse," Roderick is told: "Upon my conscience! I wonder the dogs did not hunt you. . . . you look like a cousin-german of Ouran Outang" (p. 67). Roderick is thus shamelessly reduced to subhuman status by tormentors who are themselves grotesques in a grotesque world; he is moreover taken by sharpers, tricked by innkeepers, and misled by officials of the naval administration whom he petitions for a commission as a surgeon's mate. Eventually, and in part because of his vulnerability as an alien, he is captured by a press gang and forced into service aboard a British man o' war called the *Thunder*, and during the controversial expedition to Carthage he is subjected with particular cruelty to the mindless horrors of shipboard life.<sup>13</sup>

It can hardly be doubted that Roderick's story, told in his outraged voice, is to a great extent his author's own. Roderick is of course not the only sufferer in the world Smollett imagines, but the misery he feels so deeply begins in his alien Scottishness. In projecting him as one among the many who are pained by experience, Smollett made him an extreme representation of the plight of the individual assaulted by the conditions of modern life; he made common cause, in other words, between the Scot as cultural alien and every individual as an alienated being. Roderick moves from such extremity into fierce scourging of the world, expressing that darker side of his author's self described earlier; he suffers further for such conduct, is severely punished for it in a kind of self-reflexive gesture by Smollett, but is at last redeemed after sinking into utter degradation and imprisonment. At last he discovers the father he thought he had lost, marries his beloved Narcissa (also thought lost to him),

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<sup>12</sup>*The Adventures of Roderick Random*, ed. Paul-Gabriel Boucé (Oxford, 1979), p. 63.

<sup>13</sup>The story of Roderick's adventures aboard ship occurs in chapters 24-27; it is in part autobiographical, for Smollett himself sailed as a surgeon's mate aboard the *Chichester*, which was involved in the Carthage expedition of 1741.



and escapes to his ancestral estate—a paradisaal place of great beauty, regulation and order, tranquillity and joy.

Like Peregrine Pickle, Count Fathom, and Sir Launcelot Greaves, Roderick leaves the world behind him, rejecting its power while affirming its meaning as a place of depravity and danger. It is clear from the ending that in *Roderick Random* the example of the Scottish estate is intended to provide a final and, retrospectively, an absolute standard against which the rest of the world as the hero has known it is to be judged. The representation of the Random estate is brief, but the references to its old and stable traditions of fine hospitality, and the celebration of communal affections extending to all classes, must have been an exercise in nostalgia for Smollett. In any event, upon his arrival there Roderick is an alien no more; the conditions of modern life are suspended.

That is not the case in *Humphry Clinker*. In this novel, instead of suspending the conditions of modern life by a resolution signifying retreat, Smollett gives them new interpretation. Certainly the Scottish section of the work defines standards of judgment, and it must also have served Smollett as a vehicle for nostalgic reflection. Matt Bramble's letter from Cameron is so well known as to require only the briefest comment. "This country," Matt writes of the surrounding Dumbartonshire, "is justly titled the Arcadia of Scotland"; and he encloses a copy of some verses "by Dr. Smollett," the lovely "Ode to Leven-Water" (p. 241). Like *Roderick Random*, *Humphry Clinker* locates some of the most important experiences of its characters in the city. In the earlier novel it is only London that is represented, but in the later work the travelers pause at Bath, London, Edinburgh, and Glasgow. Matt's outraged reactions at the racket, disorder, folly, meanness, and stupid pretensions observed in the English cities are as famous as his later celebrations of the Scottish countryside. His responses to Edinburgh and Glasgow, however, are enthusiastic. Edinburgh he describes as a "hot-bed of genius" (p. 227); Jerry Melford, calling Glasgow "the pride of Scotland" and observing that it "might very well pass for an elegant and flourishing city in any part of Christendom," reports that his uncle is "in raptures" with the place (p. 231).

We are reminded of Smollett's description of the latter city in *The Present State*. Clearly, in *Humphry Clinker* Glasgow defines a retrospective ideal that clarifies Matt's reactions to Bath and London. It is a beautiful city, warm in its hospitality, full of agreeable and interesting people, including men of real talent and genius. Neither *Roderick Random* nor any of the other novels makes any such issue of Glasgow, but, as I remarked earlier, it is nearly impossible to avoid the speculation that the image of this fondly remembered city rose always to consciousness whenever Smollett was detailing the usually difficult experiences of his fictional characters in the midst of any scene of urban life—and this was often.

Scotland does not escape criticism in *Humphry Clinker*; Matt deplores the lack of proper sanitation in Edinburgh and finds Scottish agricultural methods inferior to those practiced in England. There are other criticisms, but Matt

finds his health in Scotland, physically and emotionally; the internal divisions that have pained him for years are dissolved. As he journeys back across the Tweed into England, he sees more clearly than he could ever have done before the possibility of reconciliation in the external world as well—reconciliation between old and new, between the individual and society, between the admired traditions associated with Scotland and the progressive ways of England. He assists his friend Baynard in the rescue of his dashed fortunes by persuading him to organize the affairs of his estate on the well-regulated model of another friend, Dennison, who is a practitioner of modern English agricultural economy but whose estate equals the best of Scotland in the important respects of beauty, productivity, hospitality to guests, and communal harmony among its residents. Matt even finds himself promoting the idea of the Union, over the strenuous objections of Lismahago, who laments the loss of Scottish national identity and the political sacrifice it had entailed, proclaims the dangers of increased freedoms and the inevitable excesses of growing commercial prosperity, and insists on praising the good dietary effects of the oats that Matt would have a prosperous Scotland feed to its livestock instead of its people (pp. 265-70).

The debate between Matt and Lismahago occurs as the novel is winding toward its conclusion in the several marriages that will join Welsh and English estates, unite people of different nationalities, and alter the structure of relations among classes. Lydia will marry young Dennison, the son of her uncle's English friend; Tabby will marry the half-pay Scottish officer Lismahago; and the servant Win Jenkins will marry the English-Welsh Humphry Clinker, born as the result of one of Matt's amorous adventures while a student at Oxford. Not all members of the traveling party will return to Wales. The overall effect is unifying, despite the impending separations, because the families created by the marriages will replicate the political configuration of the recently formed United Kingdom. The manner in which the marriages are treated is comic, festive, unmistakably celebratory. There can be no doubting the meaning of this resolution. Indeed, its function as a kind of metaphor signifying the establishment of a new order has long been recognized by readers of the novel.

Before concluding I should like to return briefly to the episode of Matt's conflict with Lismahago over the subjects of Scotland and the Union. In the crochety voice of the latter, Smollett registers the anxiety of many Scots, surely including himself, over the threatened absorption of their homeland and its culture. Many events since the Union—the virulently anti-Scottish government policies established following the 'Forty-Five, for example—had given cause for such anxiety, which was further intensified by the continuing national prejudices already mentioned several times in the preceding pages of this essay. In the voice of Matt, however, (as a Welshman he is, like Smollett, an alien in England) we hear distinctly the personal tones of conciliation. It is hard to account for these, just two years after the appearance of the *Atom*. Students of Smollett have already acknowledged that Matt is a self-portrait, and so his voice may be

considered to represent his author's own. Account for its tones in some way we must.

The most likely explanation is that, mellowed by the terminal illness that killed him before he ever saw a printed copy of *Humphry Clinker*, distanced by his residence at Leghorn in Italy, and vented by the writing of the *Atom*, Smollett had simply gained a new perspective. Scotland was now united with England; that was a fact. A Scot could adapt to English culture without giving up all sense of native identity—as Smollett himself, through Matt, was able to remember Dumbartonshire, the Highlands, and the cities of Edinburgh and Glasgow, but still return imaginatively to England. A private integration of identity and consciousness, paralleling the balance Smollett maintained in his most public role as historian, could be achieved, and the private and public selves brought into a harmonious relation. Irascibility, one form of sensibility, could be melted into benevolence, another form, without sacrificing energy, wisdom, or sharp awareness of the world. The divided self portrayed in the dedication of *Ferdinand Count Fathom* could thus be made whole.

The kind of reconciliation—internal and external, private and public—promoted in *Humphry Clinker*, and specifically in the character of Matt Bramble, was impossible for the young author of *Roderick Random*. Perhaps we should be glad. The dislocation Smollett felt for most of his life did, after all, help to give us all the works I have been discussing, and a good many more besides. Finally, of course, it is in the novels that our greatest interest as modern readers naturally centers. For in these works Smollett, more than any other literary figure of his time, made the crisis of the individual's alienation in the modern world his focus, giving it all the force of his tremendous imaginative energy and his extraordinary sensitivity to the facts of injustice and the threat of perpetual isolation. Had he not been a Scot, perhaps he would not have written in this way, and we would be without the benefit of his prophetic, and troubling, vision. But then if he had not been a Scot who, in his many writings of many kinds, struggled continually toward a separate, much more elusive vision of unity that would save him from the dangers of his own alienation, we surely would not have *Humphry Clinker*, the novel in which at last he found such a vision and gave it expression. That would be a loss indeed.

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